

Message Text

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45

ACTION DHA-02

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 IO-13 ISO-00 ORM-02 INSE-00 VO-03

SCA-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 AID-05 SSO-00 CCO-00 NSCE-00

INRE-00 USIE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 TRSE-00 DPW-01 /088 W
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Z O 231235Z JUL 76

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 1353

INFO USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY RANGOON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 8685

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF

SUBJECT: INDOCHINESE REFUGEES: BOAT CASES: MV AVA

REF: A) STATE 180673 B) HONG KONG 8629 NOTAL

1. THIS MESSAGE IS HIGHEST PRECEDENCE BECAUSE I FEEL THAT
WE NEED ACTION BOTH HERE AND IN WASHINGTON WITHIN THE NEXT
18 HOURS. REASON FOR THIS HASTE IS THAT POLAD HAS JUST
INFORMED ME THAT AFTER NEARLY DAY-LONG SESSION HKG ENDED UP
WITH AN EVEN TOUGHER ATTITUDE THAN THEY HAD STARTED OUT
WITH. SPECIFICALLY, THEY ARE GOING TO INFORM AVA'S
CAPTAIN THAT HE WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO LAND ANY REFUGEES
HERE, GIVING AS THE REASON THAT THERE HAVE BEEN NO GUARANTEES
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OF ACCEPTANCE BY OTHER COUNTRIES OF ANY OF THE REFUGEES

(ALTHOUGH WE UNDERSTAND THAT FRENCH WHO HAVE BEEN ON BOARD BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE FIVEWHO HAVE RELATIVES IN FRANCE WHO MIGHT POSSIBLY QUALIFY TO GO THERE). THERE WILL BE NO PUBLIC STATEMENT EXCEPT TO SAY THAT REFUGEES WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO LAND BEACUSE THEY HAVE NO PLACE TO GO.

2. I RESPONDED TO THIS NEWS IN THE STRONGEST TERMS SAYING THAT WE FOUND IT INCOMPREHESNIBLE THAT COUNTRY WITH BRITAIN'S SEA TRADITIONS AND GENERAL HUMANITARIAN INSTINCTS WOULD OPERATE IN THIS FASHION. OTHER COUNTIRES IN THE AREA WERE ALREADY USING THE HKG ATTITUDE AS EXCUSE FOR REFUSAL TO ACCEPT OTHER REFUGEES. I ALSO SAID WE DID NOT BUY THE ARGUMENT THAT BY ALLOWING A FEW VIETNAMESE TO COME ASHORE AND LIVE IN PRIVATE HOSTELS RUN BY INTERNATIONAL CHARTIES WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE UNHCR WHILE THE AWAITED ALMOST CERTAIN RESETTLEMENT WOULD CREATE GREAT DIFFICULTIES WITH THE PRC OR THE CHINESE LIVING IN HONG KONG. I FELT THAT THE HKG WAS EXAGGERATING THIS ASPECT AND THAT THEIR FEAR OF BECOMING VICTIM TO A FLOOD OF VIETNAMESE ESCAPEES WAS ILL-FOUNDED. MEANWHILE IT WOULD BE EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT FOR AN INTERNATIONAL EFFORT TO BE ORGANIZED.

3. ALTHOUGH IN MY VIEW REFUGEES ARE NOT SUFFERING ON BOARD THE SHIP AND THEIR MOVEMENT NORTH TO JAPAN WHICH SEEMS TO BE THE PLAN WOULD NOT BE DISASTER FOR THEM, I FEEL THAT WE SHOULD ESCALATE OUR PRESSURE ON BOTH HMG AND HKG BECASUE OF THE MOST UNFORTUNATE PRECEDNET THE BRITISH ARE SETTING. THEREFORE, I SUGGEST THAT DEPARTMENT CALL IN UK EMBASSY OFFICAL AT SUFFICIENTLY HIGH LEVEL AND STRESS THE PRINCIPLES THAT ARE INVOLVED. PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT AMONG THESE ARE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS FOR RESCUING SURVIOURS ON THE HIGH SEAS AND THE NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON WHAT IS SURE TO BE CONTINUING PROBLEM. WE SHOULD NOTE THAT THE BURMESE CAPTAIN HAS BEHAVED IMPECCABLY THROUGHOUT ALTHOUGH FOR COUNTRY LIKE BURMA THIS MUST BE QUITE A FINANCIAL DRAIN. AS SOON AS THIS GETS AROUND, WE FEAR THAT MASTERS WILL BE MOST RELUCTANT TO PICK UP SURVIVORS. THE HKG ATTITUDE HAS MADE IT VERY DIFFICULT TO ORGANIZE AN

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INTERNATIONAL EFFORT ON A CONTINUING PORBLEM.

4. AFTER THAT IS DONE, I SHOULD BE INSTRUCTED TO SEEK APPOINTMENT WITH ACTING GOVERNOR AND REPEAT THE ARGUMENTS GIVEN TO BRITISH EMBASSY, ADDING THAT THROUGH THIS WHOLE EPISODE WE HAVE MADE CLEAR THAT WE STOOD BY TO TRY TO HELP MOVE AS MANY VIETNAMESE AS POSSIBLE AS PART OF AN INTERNATIONAL EFFORT AS SOON AS THE REFUGEES WERE ALLOWED

TO LAND THAT BY FLYING IN THE FACE OF THIS THEY
ARE QUITE OBVIOUSLY INDICATING THAT THEY
ARE GOING TO OPT OUT OF THE WHOLE BUSINESS OF HUMANITARIAN
AID TO VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN A MOST COLDBLOODED WAY.
MY INSTRUCTIONS SHOULD ARRIVE IN TIME TO ENABLE ME TO
MAKE THIS PRESENTATION BEFORE 12 NOON LOCAL TIME SATURDAY,
JULY 24, SINCE EVERYONE HERE WILL DISAPPEAR FROM
VIEW FOR THE WEEK-END THREATER. ALSO, HKG MAY TRY TO
AVOID ANY REPRESENTATIONS ON OUR PART BY SENDING THE
SHIP OFF EARLIER THAN THE EXPECTED JULY 26 DEPARTURE.

5. ALTHOUGH I DO NOT THINK THERE IS MUCH DANGER AT THE MOMENT, IT
IS WORTH NOTING THAT HM AMBASSADOR IN RANGOON HAS
EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN THAT NEWS OF THE AVA'S PLIGHT IS
CIRCULATING IN RANGOON WHILE SRV VICE FOMIN PHAN HIEN
IS VISITING BURMA. I THINK IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO WEAVE
THIS THOUGHT INTO OUR PRESENTATION EITHER HERE
OR IN WASHINGTON.
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